




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Rural Economic Development Grants

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (10.11 am): The Palaszczuk government's plan to unite and recover for Queensland jobs would not be possible without the stellar work of our agriculture sector. We were the first state to declare that agriculture was an essential industry to get the state through the COVID-19 crisis. Because of that our farmers have continued to provide fresh, high-quality produce to our supermarkets, our homes and right across the country. By supporting Queensland farmers we are also supporting a sector that is creating more jobs, which is what Queensland needs right now.

The Rural Economic Development Grants scheme is a prime example of how the Palaszczuk government is supporting local businesses and local jobs. Our over two rounds have helped 29 businesses and 1,200 jobs right across regional Queensland. These grants contribute up to \$250,000 in matching funding to agricultural businesses to help them expand and create new jobs. Earlier this month I had the absolute pleasure of visiting some of the RED grant recipients on the Sunshine Coast. Plants Direct Queensland at Eumundi has been supplying the landscape industry for almost 40 years. They are an amazing operation already, with around 50 hectares under production. Plants Direct will use the RED grant on a purpose-built facility to supply plants in biodegradable pots, a project that will support up to 17 new jobs.

I also dropped in to Kenilworth Dairies, recipients of a RED grant in round 1.

Mr Hunt: Great cheese!

Mr FURNER: Absolutely! It is a great business. It is wonderful to see what the owner has done with their grant. They are weeks away from flicking the switch on their new bottling plant. That means jobs for about 24 people in the local community directly and along the supply chain. This is yet another sign of how our plan to unite and recover for Queensland jobs is delivering for communities on the Sunshine Coast.

Expressions of interest for round 3 of the RED grants scheme closed last Friday. Expressions of interest amounted to about 148. The Queensland Rural Economic Development Grants scheme is a high job-creating scheme with high yields yet to be seen. We will work with QRIDA to make sure we work with those applicants and deliver. I look forward to announcing the next round of recipients in the weeks ahead. Agriculture is one of the key pillars of the Palaszczuk government's plan to unite and recover for Queensland jobs and RED grants will be critical to build an even brighter future for Queensland's regions. Like always, we will stand shoulder to shoulder with our Queensland farmers to get us through this COVID-19 pandemic.